

Linguistic Capital and Power Relations in *Shark Tank Pakistan*: A Bourdieusian Sociolinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

This paper investigates linguistic capital and the production of power relations in Shark Tank Pakistan from the perspective of Bourdieusian sociolinguistics. Shark Tank Pakistan is an Entrepreneurial reality television show where language is negotiated as symbolic capital to employ entrepreneurs' credibility in seeking investments and Sharks' authority in granting investments in their businesses. The study employs Bourdieusian Sociolinguistic Analysis (1991) and conversational analysis (CA) to investigate how persuasive strategies are used by entrepreneurs for legitimacy in investment negotiations and how Sharks assert authority through questioning and interruptions. For this purpose, four episodes are purposively selected from Shark Tank Pakistan season one (2024-2025). The results indicate authority and identity as negotiated with conversational control and turn-taking and the persuasion and negotiation techniques as linguistic capital, which is a combination of the ethical, emotional, market appeals to credibility. The code-switching between Urdu and English is the indicator of social stratification as a sign of cultural embeddedness and professional and financial power. It is also through interactions that a neoliberal meritocratic ideology is reproduced, where success is seen to be based on individual ability and initiative and structural obstacles are kept very private. Altogether, the paper proves the way in which televised pitches perform authority, justify entrepreneurs, and support socio-economic hierarchies in modern Pakistan.

Keywords: Bourdieusian sociolinguistics, *entrepreneurial discourse*, Shark Tank Pakistan, conversational analysis (CA).

Introduction

Media discourse provides diverse data for researchers, particularly in the context of applied linguistics. Over the years, researchers have examined various media formats to explore the intrinsic features of media discourse from multiple perspectives. In the early 2000s, the new format based on business content gained much attention and viewership (Copilah-Ali, 2021). This new format of reality entrepreneurship was coined as ‘entertainment’ (Down, 2010; Swail et al, 2014) to signify the amalgamation of entrepreneurship with entertainment. These reality shows are not only business endeavors but also reflection of verbal and non-verbal constructions where power, authority, reliability, persuasion and social hierarchies are negotiated through language (2021; Kumar & Dey, 2023; Mayer, 2021). One of these reality shows, *Shark Tank*, is based on *Dragon’s Den*, which itself was a remake of Japanese reality TV show *The Tigers of Money*. The show is produced by American Franchise and aired in many countries including USA, UK, Canada, India, Brazil and Pakistan. The franchise produced its first season in Pakistan from November 2024 to January 2025. This is the first show of its kind in Pakistani entertainment industry. Though argumentation, persuasion or negotiation is not a new public phenomenon, but a novel approach in TV media where two parties are negotiating a business approval (Barton, 2009; Anderson & Warren, 2011). Many international studies on entrepreneurial discourse claim that there are certain discursive practices which reveal how participants employ authority, power, pragmatic strategies and legitimacy via language to position themselves in such programs (Copilah-Ali, 2021; Kumar & Dey, 2023; Mayer, 2021; Perry, 2025). Moreover, global studies indicate that business reality shows like *Shark Tank*, *Dragon Den* and *The Tiger of Money* rely on diverse linguistic choices like narrative framing, persuasive strategies and status cues to create influence (Copilah-Ali, 2021; Mayer, 2021; Perry, 2025). These findings indicate that entrepreneurial discourse can be systematically examined from conversational analysis and sociolinguistic standpoint.

Being a multilingual country, Pakistan constitutes a complex sociolinguistic context because of its linguistic stratification. English, Urdu, and regional languages carry unequal social, economic and symbolic value (Ashraf, 2023;

Raza, et al,2025). In this context, the TV shows like *Shark Tank Pakistan*, cannot be just evaluated solely on the financial possibility but also on their ability to linguistically align with leading customs prevailed and acknowledged as normal in society. Furthermore, Mayer's (2021) analysis of rhetoric and non-verbal communication on pitches from US version of *Shark Tank* confirms that linguistic choices of entrepreneurs significantly shape investors' decisions. Consequently, the structural features of language are indicators of competence, power and credibility (Bourdieu's,1991).

Despite the proliferation of studies, the sociolinguistic realities of postcolonial and multilingual societies are overlooked as most current studies are sited in Western contexts. In Pakistan, the predominant areas of media research have focused on political talk shows (Tahir et al., 2025), news media, and gender representation (Tabassum & Hafeez, 2023). Entrepreneurial television discourse, particularly from a sociolinguistic perspective, remains underexplored.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory *Language and symbolic power*, this research aims to identify the language features that indicate how language functions as social and linguistic capital in Pakistan's first TV reality show *Shark Tank*. The conversational interactions between Sharks and entrepreneurs provide a rich database to examine how language mediates authority and legitimacy in Pakistani entrepreneurial discourse. For this, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of linguistic, social, symbolic and cultural capital provides a solid framework along with conversational analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The strategic use of language in televised entrepreneurial programs enables participants to construct power, authority, and social status through rhetorical and interactional strategies (Kumar, 2023). *Shark Tank* is a leading entrepreneurial reality show, which focuses on the importance of communication in business decision-making and competitive business around the world (Mayer, 2021). In Pakistan, these dynamics are reflected in *Shark Tank Pakistan*, which pits a variety of pitchers against the elite of sharks in a sociolinguistic market where linguistic

capital - according to Bourdieu (1991) - defines legitimacy and access to resources across class and regional lines.

Although the international researches have studied the authority and power in linguistic decisions in the Shark Tank formats (e.g., Poncini, 2004), none of them have analyzed linguistic capital and symbolic power in Pakistan. The local studies center on gender, code switching, politics, pragmatics, and critical discourse (Rahman, 2018; Mahboob, 2003; Toor, 2011), and overlook the topic of entrepreneurship media, despite its cultural emphasis.

This disjunction obscures the way Shark Tank Pakistan reinforces linguistic inequalities, which make elite practices the markers of entrepreneurial success natural. These power relations require the urgency of a Bourdieusian analysis to unpack, to guide fair media practices and the startup ecosystem in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

- 1 To identify discourse strategies used by entrepreneurs and sharks to construct authority, expertise, and credibility.
- 2 To find out that how these discourse strategies implicitly or explicitly signify the sociolinguistic hierarchies embedded in Pakistani society.\

Research Questions

- 1 Which linguistic strategies are predominantly employed by sharks and entrepreneurs to assert persuasion, authority and power relations?
- 2 How does linguistic capital and symbolic power covertly or overtly expose the prevailing social and economic hierarchies via neo-liberal narrative shaped by entrepreneurial programs?

Significance of the Study

The present study is going to contribute significantly to the area of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and entrepreneurial communication by analyzing the role of language as a source of power in Shark Tank Pakistan. It will be of great interest to the business discourse in the prism of sociolinguistics and especially

demonstrate how the speakers apply the linguistic means to the strategic level to gain authority, negotiate position, and impose decisions in a competitive entrepreneurial context. The study expands the sociolinguistic research to a broad spectrum by concentrating on a televised business platform, as opposed to the traditional areas of classroom interaction, political speech and everyday bilingual communication.

The research is also important as it is, as far as is known, one of the first to transfer the concept of linguistic capital and symbolic power of Pierre Bourdieu to Shark Tank Pakistan. This theoretical application will assist in uncovering how some types of language, speech styles, accents and discourse practices might be more highly regarded than other in a neoliberal media environment. By so doing, the study will reveal how language plays the role not only in communication, but also in the reproduction of social hierarchies, prestige and legitimacy in the discourse of entrepreneurship. These insights are particularly significant in the Pakistani context where English, Urdu, and regional languages tend to have unequal symbolic significance.

Moreover, the results of this research will provide new opportunities to study sociolinguistics, media, entrepreneurship communication and critical discourse analysis in the future. It will be used as a source of reference by scholars who want to explore the connection between language and power in the contemporary business media, particularly in South Asian and postcolonial societies.

Literature Review

The research on entrepreneurial reality TV highlights the significance of discourse for successful pitch interactions (Mayer's, 2021). The verbal and non-verbal communication in pitch interactions substantially influence the investors' decision suggesting that communication style can affect business outcomes, not only the business idea itself Mayer's (2021). The key devices to seek compliance from investors are structured conversation, politeness strategies, turn-taking and controlling the floor, and persuasion (García-Gómez, 2017) Similarly, Kumar and Dey (2023) research indicates that entrepreneurs employ strategic linguistic choices for persuasion. These studies

suggest that entrepreneurial pitching is guided by discourse and language functions as a strategic resource for achieving goals.

The media discourse is multifaceted due to its diversity and mass communication. Therefore, the role of multimodal resources becomes more important to construct visual and linguistic entrepreneurial identities (Copilah-Ali, 2021). According to Copilah-Ali (2021), these identities are negotiated via language, gestures, tone, gaze, attire, facial expressions etc. Copilah-Ali (2021) argues that only what is said is not enough but also to observe how it is performed. Though overtly, this research does not use sociolinguistic lens, still it contributes to look at entrepreneurial discourse from a multimodal perspective.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital and symbolic power is a critique to traditional theories of linguistics. Bourdieu (1991) argues that language is not just a means of communication nor its neutral; rather, it is a medium of power through which individuals reflect and maintain their social image. Every verbal interaction occurs in a specific social context which Bourdieu calls *Linguistic Marketplace*. In this linguistic market different modes of communication are socially labeled indicating dominant or marginalized groups (Bourdieu, 1991). Perry (2025) further used this notion on media where these platforms allow speakers to utilize their linguistic capital for achieving social and economic goals. In the Pakistani context, however, these dynamics have not been systematically examined in *Shark Tank*, creating a gap for research. This study aims to fill this research gap by employing Bourdieu's sociolinguistic lens to study pitch interactions in *Shark Tank Pakistan*, focusing on how linguistic capital is mobilized and contested to shape or reshape social, cultural, and symbolic identities in televised entrepreneurial interaction.

The current study is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital and symbolic power. Language is viewed as currency in the linguistic market. Proficiency in prestigious languages/dialects evoke speakers' legitimacy. Linguistic exchanges are symbolic struggles in which speakers attempt to accumulate and display capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

The entrepreneurial TV programs like *Dragon's Den*, *Shark Tank*, *Restaurant Startup*, *Planet of the Apps*, and

Entrepreneur Elevator Pitch share a common pattern of judgmental investors and persuasive entrepreneurs (Anderson & Warren, 2011; García-Gómez, 2017; Kumar & Dey, 2023). The linguistic competence of both sharks and entrepreneurs exhibit rhetoric and non-verbal communication cues, making it a strong site to study linguistic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; García-Gómez, 2017; Kumar & Dey, 2023). In addition, the linguistic choices used to label investors like sharks, tigers, dragons etc. in these programs indicate power structures that frame dominance of one group over other, proposing them a productive cite for study through the lens of symbolic capital. (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). For instance, the institutional power of sharks can be examined by the way they control turn-taking, evaluate discourse, initiate arguments, show detest and challenge linguistic performances. These diverse pitch interactions reflect Bourdieu's claim that linguistic authority derives from both social position and discursive legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991).

The current study employs discourse-analytic tools keeping a sociolinguistic positioning in order to investigate how linguistic behavior of entrepreneurs and sharks signify authority, social and economic class, and corporate structures within business-oriented media interaction.

Theoretical Framework

The current research employs Pierie Bourdieu's (1991) concept of Linguistic Capital and Symbolic Power and conversational analysis to analyze a reality show 'Shark Tank' which was broadcasted on a private-sector entertainment channel in Pakistan during 2024-2025. Bourdieu in his book *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991) defines linguistic capital as individuals' cultural assets which they acquire from language competency. By symbolic power Bourdieu means ability of language to impose meanings, maintain social hierarchies, and legitimize authority. The language is not neutral according to Bourdieu; it embodies and reproduces the hierarchies in social, cultural, and institutional aspects. Such a framework can be applied in the context of Shark Tank Pakistan to understand how speakers utilize language strategically in negotiating power and building legitimacy and positioning in the entrepreneurial landscape. Therefore, the theory of Bourdieu creates a solid base of the

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analysis of the way in which linguistic practices create and maintain power relations in televised business discourse.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts qualitative research design grounded in conversational analysis within a sociolinguistic framework. The nature of research is descriptive and interpretive aiming to uncover the linguistic choices or strategies employed by participants in discourse to manifest social and economic strata in the context of entrepreneurial media discourse.

Population

The population comprises all pitch interactions in all episodes (11) between Sharks and Entrepreneurs in Season one of Shark Tank Pakistan, broadcasted during 2024 to 2025.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The current study employs a purposive sampling technique to select the most relevant episodes of reality TV show 'Shark Tank Pakistan'. Four episodes are selected from total of 11 episodes aired in season one (November 2024 to January 2025). The episodes which provide rich linguistic diversity, persuasive style, rhetoric strategies, gender representation, and positioning, are selected purposively. As each episode of this program runs approximately 56-58 minutes, the selected sample provides a rich database for conversational analysis grounded in linguistic capital and symbolic power.

Data Collection

The data for the current research is obtained from official platforms; the Myco app and Green Entertainment YouTube Channel. The episodes are downloaded for transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The selected episodes of Shark Tank Pakistan are analyzed using CA within Bourdieu's sociolinguistic framework. The unit of analysis are pitching interactions between sharks and entrepreneurs focusing on turn-taking, interruptions, Urdu-English code-switching, persuasive and politeness strategies.

Thematic interpretation techniques are used for analyzing the data to reveal patterns for examining the linguistic forms within the identified themes in the selected episodes. Moreover, roman transcription is used to present Urdu-English excerpts from the data. Further, Bourdieu's theoretical framework is employed to analyze themes in order to identify linguistic capital and symbolic power responsible for producing, reflecting or resisting neo-liberal narratives and hierarchies in Pakistani entrepreneurial discourse.

There are seven sharks and one host (mediator) in Shark Tank Pakistan:

1. Faisal Aftab (FA): Founder, CEO & General Partner of Zayn.VC.
2. Junaid Iqbal (JA): Founder and CEO of Salt Ventures, formerly of Careem.
3. Kareem Teli (KT): Managing Director of Igloo Pakistan.
4. Rabeel Waraich (RW): Founder and CEO of Sarmayacar
5. Usman Bashir (UB): Founder BTCM
6. Romana Dada(RD): Founder and Investor
7. Aleena Nadeem (AN): Founder and CEO Edufi
8. Rubab Hashim (RH): Host

For clarity and consistency in presenting conversational data, sharks and entrepreneurs are coded. Sharks are coded with abbreviations derived from the initial of their names as Shark-US (Usman Bashir), whereas entrepreneurs are coded according to the pitch interaction episode wise; EP1(first solo entrepreneur), EP2 (second solo entrepreneur) in episode 1. In case of team, entrepreneurs will be referred as Team-1, Team-2 in episode 1.

Delimitation

To maintain analytical depth of the study all episodes are not included for research. Moreover, study focuses on linguistic use and discourse strategies, not on financial outcomes of pitches. Also, analysis is limited to linguistic interactions between entrepreneurs and sharks, excluding other aspects like non-verbal communication, production features, and audience's feedback.

Result & Discussion

The chapter presents a detailed analysis of the selected episodes from the Shark Tank Pakistan season one (2024-2025). The analysis is carried out through qualitative thematic design grounded in interactional analysis and Bourdieusian Sociolinguistics (1991). The chapter moves from micro-level conversational patterns to macro-level examination of social hierarchical system and neoliberal ideology. The following table explains the analytical flow:

Table 5.1. Multilevel Analytical Framework

Analytical Level	Focus	Theoretical/ Methodological lens
Micro	Turn-taking, interruptions, floor control	Conversational Analysis (CA)
Meso	Code-switching, persuasion, politeness strategies	Sociolinguistic Analysis
Macro	Symbolic power, hierarchy, neoliberal ideology	Piere Bourdieu's Framework

The analysis and findings of the study are discussed under the thematic headings. The following themes are used to uncover conversational patterns, persuasion, Urdu-English code-switching, and neoliberal stance constructed and negotiated in an entrepreneurial TV show:

1. Construction of identity and authority via Conversational Patterns
2. Persuasion and negotiation tactics reflecting linguistic capital
3. Urdu-English Code-switching; a marker of social strata
4. Reproduction of Neoliberal Meritocratic Ideology

1. Construction of identity and authority via Conversational Pattern

The first theme examines how authority and identity is constructed through interaction by both the sharks and entrepreneurs. The sharks assert their authority through regular interruptions and topic control. They show their power by dominating the conversational floor. Sharks

frequently use imperatives like, ‘give me the exact value’, ‘projected revenue’, or ‘time frame’ etc. This implies that authority is not merely institutional but can be enacted via floor regulation. The following excerpts from episode one illustrates the above claim;

EP1: sharks, *meri jo ask he wo 75 lacs ha* and am offering 25% equity of my company. So sharks, *ye basically hamara most premium bat ha, iski price jo ha wo 135000 ha*. Isme jo *ha ye proper customize hoava ha* on customer demand...

Shark-AN: *tou ye price me kbi becha ha ye bat*

EP1: *jee, bikul, is saal jo ha sharks ye hamara game changer tha q ke ye isi sal launch kiya ha, is saal 12 piece sale kiye hain —*

Shark-UB: *abi tak apne sales kitni kari?*

EP-1: *sharks, humne 2022 me start kiya, 2022 me hamari sale 6 lac the, 2023 me twenty lac, and sharks aaj ki date me twenty five lacs ha and isko jo hum hain Inshallah forty to forty five pe close krein ge —*

Shark-JI: *acha Wamis zara market k mutaliq btain, apne kaha k global market 600 million ki ha —*

EP-1: *yes —*

Shark-JI: *Pakistan ki kitni ha*

EP-1: *65 million dollars*

Shark-JI: *thoda market ka breakup btain k Australia kitni bari market ha, India kitni bari market ha* from a demand perspective and *supply se btain Pakistan se kitna supply hota and dosre mulkon se kitna hota ha?*

It is evident that how authority reflects through conversation. Sharks frequently interrupt during the first pitch, moreover, they direct the conversation towards their interests. This not only demonstrates their authority but also echoes their identities of being sharks; the investors.

Simultaneously, the entrepreneurs also attempt to shape their identity as confident, visionary small scale business owners. The entrepreneurs are not just using ‘defending strategies’, but negotiating authority in an unequal conversational setting. There is frequent use word ‘sharks’ by the EP1 for calling sharks instead of using their name, on contrary sharks call him by his name. These findings indicate that interruptus, turn-taking, floor regulation, questioning etc. are markers of exhibiting authority and command in conversational context. These pitch interactions are

reflection of social hierarchies. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the sharks' control over conversational floor and consistent interruptions operate as linguistic power, allowing them to practice symbolic power and replicating hierarchical relations in Pakistani entrepreneurial field.

2. Persuasion and negotiation tactics reflecting linguistic capital

The second theme addresses the persuasion and negotiation strategies as form of linguistic capital. Apart from interactional authority, entrepreneurs strategically deploy language to establish their credibility and accumulate symbolic recognition from Sharks. Persuasion in pitch interactions are not merely rhetorical; rather it is a source to signify their competency and business expertise. The following excerpt from Shark Tank episode 3 illustrates how persuasion and negotiation operates as linguistic capital.

Team-1: *Sharks agr apke pass ye magic wand ho jisko use ker k aap apne bachpan me ja sakte hon tou aap apne lia konsa khana choose krein ge? Sugar se bana hoa chemical wala khana ya ghar me banava healthy khane?*

Shark-FA: Healthy.

Team-1: *as parents hum apne bachon ke lia best food chahte hain, likin jab bat unki pheli thos gaza ki ati ha tou is tara ka food choose krne me mushkal ka samna karna parta ha, jo ke healthy ho, chemical free ho, convenient ho and at the same time made in Pakistan ho, q ke Pakistan me bne 90% brands chemical istamal krte hain. Sharks, I present to you Yumkins, a natural baby food brand jo ke healthy, convenient and affordable baby food products banata ha... there is a huge market opportunity with an increase number of parents seeking healthy and convenient food options for their young ones. To cater the need of this market aur Yumkins ko Pakistan ke her bache ki pheli healthy gaza banana ke lia, hume apki help ki zarorat ha and for that we are offering 15% stake in our company in exchange of nine million Rs. So, sharks are you ready to join Yumkins to eradicate malnutrition from Pakistan and from whole globe.*

The above theme starts with a hypothetical scenario to gain attentions of the Sharks. By giving the option to choose between healthy and chemical food, Team-1 sets the floor by

activating childhood nostalgia forcing sharks into a moral binary. This hypothetical situation provoked Sharks to response ‘healthy’, which made the floor secure for entrepreneurs before introducing their product. The establishment of moral ground is a strategic move from Team-1. Later when they say, ‘*as parents hum apne bachon ke lia best food chahte hain...*’, smartly, they moved from individual choice to collective parental identity. Moreover, Team-1 presented a comparison to make a strong stance for their product; constructing a symbolic opposition:

Table 5.2. Binary Oppositions Constructed in the Representation of *Yumkins*

Other Brands	Yumkins
Chemical	Natural
Harmful	Healthy
Mass-production	Ethical

Overall, persuasion and negotiation in the context of the pitch interactions can be considered as the manifestations of linguistic capital where the entrepreneurs strive to obtain a symbolic legitimacy and financial investment. The strategical amalgamation of emotional appeal, ethical positioning, market logic, and code-switching helps the participants to transform cultural and moral credibility into an economic value. Bourdieusian viewpoint makes it so that these discursive strategies are not just persuasive strategies but rather are organized resources which help actors to compete and position themselves as well as gain capital in the entrepreneurial sphere.

3. Urdu-English Code-switching; a marker of social strata

The third theme is a study of Urdu-English code-switching as the indicator of social positioning in the entrepreneurial sector. The choice of language in the pitch interactions is not accidental; instead, it shows how the participants are provided with the linguistic capital and aligned to one of the social layers. The Urdu and English indexes were strategic in alternating with each other categorizing identities, professional competence, and legitimacy of the market.

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The excerpt below taken from episode 11 pitch-1 shows how Urdu-English code-switching as a social positioning marker in the entrepreneurial sector works. The entrepreneur also switches between Urdu and English as an indicator of difference in access to linguistic capital, between narrative alignment and financial and corporate language. The following snippet also shows how patterned code-switching, as well, is indicative of the habitus and social stratification of the participants. English is mainly employed in expression of financial articulation and market framing, whereas Urdu is used in expression of relation and affective contact.

Team-1 (EP-1): *Assalam-o-alaikm sharks, mere naam ha Ashar aur muje mere kuch dost pyar se gezarwala kete hain.*

Team-1 (EP-2): *Assalam-o-alaikm sharks, mera naam ha Shan-ul-haq, am CTO and Co-founder of easy geyser.*

Team-1 (EP-1): *so sharks, Pakistan aik bohat bare energy crises se guzar raha ha, aur her saal hum billions of dollars ki energy waste krte hain because of inefficient devices and very bad and old technology...*

Shark-US: *... is saal ka revenue kitna hit kiya ha?... ye btain apka gross margin kya hota ha or apka net margin kya hota ha?...*

Shark-AN: *ok, I have a question on this, apne doso doso unit sale kiye ha na?*

Team-1 (EP-1): *humne 100 k qareeb unit sale kiye hain—*

Shark-AN: *ok mager apka order ha do so ka, aur aap do hazar panchsoo tak ponchne ki koshish kr re hain, right? What is the one crore break down? is it sixty precent marketing, what's this one crore for?*

This extract shows that there is systemic functional code-switching as opposed to a mixed up language. The entrepreneurs start with Urdu with the culturally incorporated greeting (Assalam-o-alaikum) and introduction of oneself, hence the indexing of relational warmth and social closeness. Nevertheless, the words in English language prevail when professional identity (CTO and Co-founder) is mentioned and macroeconomic problems (energy crisis, billions of dollars, inefficient devices) are discussed. This transformation indicates

the unity with the corporate discourse and international market validation.

In their discursive speech, the sharks, especially Shark-US and Shark-AN, use English more often when speaking of financial indicators, e.g., of the gross margin, the net margin, of revenue, and of a breakdown. English is here treated as economic power and technical assessment language. The Urdu is used in structurally supportive blocks of questioning and the core financial terminology is still in English. This is a linguistic process that indicates the institutionalized correlation of English with economic skills and superior socio-economic status in Pakistan.

The results of the Urdu-English code-switching analysis of pitch interactions prove that the choice of language in the sphere of business is highly stratified and socially significant. English is continuously becoming a major code of financial discussion, technical skills, and institutional authority and thus a high-value linguistic capital. Instead, Urdu gives a signal of cultural embeddedness, warmth of relation and localness. The rhythmic nature of the alternation of the two codes is not only an indication of communicative effectiveness but also the enactment of classed identities in a competitive economic space.

Reproduction of Neoliberal Meritocratic Ideology

Based on the preceding themes that explored linguistic capital and class positioning, this theme changes the analysis to the larger ideology within which the interactions are framed. The discussion in Shark Tank Pakistan repeatedly makes the success of an entrepreneur a product of personal initiative, creativity, thinking, and risk-taking. Market performance is considered the paramount value of all worth and structural constraints, like unequal access to resources, education, or networks is to a significant extent unaddressed. Along Bourdieusian lines, the field is one that runs on neoliberal meritocratic rationality, in which the decision to invest seems to be a disinterested one based on a vastly subjective belief in the nature of competition, efficiency, and self-interest. Success is defined as something that is earned, quantifiable and deserved; failure is subject-centered and not context-based. Through this, the discourse proliferates

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the market hierarchy and introduces the success of an entrepreneur as a justification of his or her individual excellence.

The following two pitches taken from episode 13 of Shark Tank Pakistan, reflect how the logic of meritocracy is put to the test in practice with the definition of the conditionality of the successful entrepreneurship, the dynamics of negotiation and the agency of the entrepreneur in accepting or declining an offer:

Pitch-1

Team-1 (Ep-1): *Hello Sharks Assalam Waleikum, I am Kashmala Ali, a US certified professional hair extension artist. Assalam Waleikum, ...So har doosra banda kaam kar raha hai lekin jab hair fashion industry ko dekha jaye to wahan par ek bahut bada gap hai jo ke Queen Extension... jo cater kar raha hai... Hum Queen Extension mein Queen Extension ki services dete hain. Hair extension ke product sell karte hain aur training aur certification provide karte hain....*

Queen Extension mein is time humare paas 12 different types ke hair extension maujood hain. Humari ask jo shark se hai wo hai 50 lakh with 10% equity.

Shark-UB: *Aap pehli female entrepreneur ho apne area se... great potential in you... For that hum teen sharks aapko ek offer place karna chahte hain... 50 lakh ke against 30% equity company mein jaayenge...*

Team-1 (Ep-1): *Main counter same equity mein 10 se 15% par aa jaungi...*

Shark-UB: *Hum log ko 10% chahiye... We can go to 27%... just to show you ke we really wanna make this deal happen.*

Team-1 (Ep-1): *Worth pata hai Queen Extension ki ki jab wo internationally jaega to iski kya market...Bohat badi hai...Mera jo end mein equity mein de sakti hoon 15...*

Shark-UB: *So I can give you one final offer, and I'm not even asking them... all convince them... We can go to 27 ek ek par hum aur chhod dete hain... just to show you ki we really wanna make this deal happen...*

Team-1 (Ep-1): *No from my side, sorry... ok thank...*

Shark-KT: ... *I like how they negotiate and I think they're with some room to maneuver... Par ye nahi ki ji bilkul aapne apne business ko hand over kar diya...*

This interaction is built on the identity of the first-mover advantage, technical expertise, and market insight where the entrepreneur focuses on her effort to fill a gap in the hair fashion industry in Baluchistan. The sharks confirm her merit and potentiality making investment a conditioned issue based on her proved competency and performance in terms of negotiating.

The theme is supported on a macro-level in the Pakistani context: the fact that the ultimate failure of the venture occurs due to the refusal of the entrepreneur to accept the offer of the sharks supports the theme. Whereas neoliberal ideology places success as a result of skill and merit, structural facts like access to capital, gendered constraints, and market risk, as well as, meritorious entrepreneurs may decline to accept offers will demonstrate that meritocracy is contingent and contextually limited. This dynamic replicates the neoliberal reasoning by selling entrepreneurial accomplishment as an aspect of ability and initiative, and by also revealing its restrictions within a Pakistani context.

Pitch-2

Shark-JI: *Walekum salam, and Ali sab se pehle to welcome to Shark Tank Pakistan. Bohat dil ko lagi aapki presentation aur aapki story bhi, aur jo aap kaam kar rahe hain. To sab se pehle yeh batayein, aap dono kaise mile?*

Team-2(EP-1): *So Ali is my neighbor. We are class fellows since ninth class. To hamara hospital mein jana laga rehta tha with my prosthetic leg ke hawale se, to usi mein hum ne gap identification ki. Apni marzi ke mutabiq apna knee want move kar pa raha hai. So isi cheez ko dekhte hue Ali decided ke we will do mechatronics engineering for our university, and then maine computer engineering decide ki. Even I have to change my department to do this project. So it's a long story journey ke hum log shuru se decided thay ke hum ne isi field mein jana hai aur isi ko continue karna hai. Then finally bari larrkhara ke maine apne partners milaye jo hamare co-founder Sanan Ahmed Gulzar University ke saath mile. Then university mein ek product*

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banaya. Then abhi hum is ko mazeed khud se improve kar rahe hain. Job waghera nahi kar rahe, to isi ko le ke aage chal rahe hain.

Shark-JI: *Is technology ke baare mein batayein. Hum log engineers nahi hain, to aasan zaban mein hamare liye bhi aur dekhne walon ke liye bhi ke yeh kaise work karti hai. Aur khas taur par aap ne kaha video mein ke jab woh sochte hain ke taang ko uthana hai to woh usi tarah prosthetic leg move karti hai. Tell us how that works.....*

Team-2(EP-2): *Humein sharks aapka time apne finance ko manage karne mein, company ke structure aur baad mein technology ko kis tarah se manage karna hai — supply chain and manufacturing — all these things. Kyoon ke hum log teenon engineers hain, we are tech guys, to tech ko hum log manage kar sakte hain, improve karte rahenge. Lekin uske baad baqi jo hamare marketing aspects aur business aspects hain, I think us mein humein aap log ki...*

Shark-JI: *I think fund raising, fund raising grants processing waghera mein bhi hum madad kar sakte hain. Aap kaafi inspiration ho poore mulk ke liye ke hum kuch bhi kar sakte hain, aur yahi hai Shark Tank ka maqsad ke hum sab ko umeed dete hain ke kuch bhi aap hasil kar sakte ho, bas dimaag chalane se. So well done, mashallah. Lagta hai ke saare sharks in hain, so bohat مبارک ho — you have our time and you have our support. So deal pakki.*

In this pitch, the entrepreneurs position their project as the outcome of their self-solving, technical capabilities, and desire and demonstrate how their personal experience influenced their innovation. The sharks understand their talent, technical ability, and the possible influence of their idea, which makes them help, however, on the conditions that the entrepreneurs demonstrate their ability and intentions. Such a dynamic underscores the meritocratic logic in which only the individuals who show initiative, ability and perseverance are awarded the chance to access resources and opportunities. On a macro level, it describes the way in which in Pakistan, the entrepreneur is commonly anticipated to fight through structural and financial obstacles. The sharks repeat a neoliberal ideology of individual effort and achievement, of personal responsibility over group or

state-sponsored success, by filtering out only those individuals who are able to perform and deliver tangible results.

The discussion of the relationships between entrepreneurs and sharks in Shark Tank Pakistan shows that the discourse of media can showcase and support the larger social and economic ideologies. In various notes, entrepreneurs showcase their ideas as the product of individual ability, hard work and problem-solving, whereas sharks evaluate, confirm, and negotiate funding according to proven competence, initiative and possible influence. This movement does not just emphasize the importance of agency of individuals, but also demonstrates the contingency of opportunity in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. On a macro level, these relationships are reflected in the socio-economic situation of Pakistan, where structural assistance is scarce and success is frequently defined as the achievement of individual effort and not systematic assistance. The show recreates the ideology of neoliberal meritocracy through these televised negotiations, with success being dependent on personal competence, perseverance and negotiation strategy whilst implicitly authorizing unequal access to resources. All in all, the results indicate the combined influence of media, discourse, and socio-economic ideology on the perception of entrepreneurship and merit in modern Pakistan.

Conclusion

The present paper analyzed how the linguistic capital and symbolic power work in entrepreneurial media in Pakistan by analyzing Shark Tank Pakistan in terms of Bourdieu framework. The results indicate that the language in this mediated market is a strategic and hierarchical resource on which sharks and entrepreneurs bargain power, legitimacy, as well as investment. The research also discovered that persuasion, technical fluency, turn control, and evaluative questioning are not neutral types of communication; they are useful in creating and maintaining power relations. The use of code-switching between Urdu and English also indicates the stratification of the sociolinguistic structure, where English is a capital of higher value associated with elite status, whereas Urdu expresses proximity and approachability. In general, the study illustrates that the Pakistan version of the Shark Tank entrepreneurial talk brings with it the reproduction of larger social and ideological hierarchies in the

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multilingual and postcolonial environment of Pakistan. It establishes that language is not only a communicative instrument but a means by which power, identity and resources are negotiated and sustained.

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